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SUBJECT: KING AND SENIOR OFFICIALS WELCOME CODEL LEAHY

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (S) Summary: King Abdullah told Codel Leahy that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the key issue facing Jordan, time was running out to make progress, and soon a two-state solution may not be perceived as feasible. The King urged Democrats and Republicans to present a unified position on Syria to dispel doubts about U.S. policy over the next few years. The King also commented on Iraqis in Jordan, saying they are guests but are a heavy economic burden and security concern. In the Codel's meeting with UNHCR, the organization's Jordan Representative suggested a bilateral assistance mechanism be established to help countries like Jordan. UNHCR also told Codel that DHS's planned circuit ride to adjudicate resettlement applications in June would be a key test to determine if USG resettlement targets could be achieved this year. End summary.

12. (U) Codel Leahy visited Jordan May 26-29 and included Senators Leahy, Cochran, Hagel, Salazar and Cardin and Representative Welch.

Efforts on the Peace Process

13. (S) King Abdullah highlighted his view that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the key issue facing Jordan and the region during a working lunch he hosted for Codel Leahy (accompanied by Ambassador) at his personal residence. He stressed that time was running out, and within as little as one and a half years the opportunity for a two-state solution may be lost, raising doubts about whether peace could be achieved. The King urged greater U.S. and Israeli support for Abu Mazen and his partners, and said if the peace process begins to move forward, other Arab and Muslim countries would be willing to get involved. He gave Pakistan as an example, saying President Musharraf is following the progress of the Mecca Agreement with an eye to potentially engage with Israel. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE were also ready to move toward full relations with Israel according to the King.

14. (S) King Abdullah expected the Palestinian national unity government to collapse when the first major conflict arises, citing fundamental ideological differences between Fatah and Hamas. Ultimately Abu Mazen will have to hold a referendum to give peace a chance.

15. (S) The King told the Codel that peace with Israel was a "cold peace and getting colder" in the minds of many Jordanians, who feel that security - and more specifically Jordan securing Israel's border - was the sole facet of Jordan's relationship with Israel. "As radicals gain power Jordan will face serious challenges," he warned.

Iran and Syria

16. (S) King Abdullah placed the need for progress on the

peace process in the larger context of Iran's threat to regional stability. Iran feels it holds all the cards. Responding to Senator Hagel's question on how to deal with Iran, the King advised that the U.S. apply both a direct and an indirect approach. "The U.S. sent an important signal when you began to take down Revolutionary Guard operatives inside Iraq," he said. On the indirect front, the U.S. should continue to apply pressure on Iran in Lebanon and against its proxy, Syria.

¶17. (S) The Hariri tribunal was a very important tool to pressure Syria, and indirectly, Iran. The U.S. should not begin negotiating with Syria now, when the Hariri tribunal was on the verge of being launched. "Let the pressure build, then negotiate," he said. Already, President Asad was reaching out to Saudi Arabia to strike a deal to exculpate himself and his brother, he said. The King cited mixed signals sent by congressional delegations visiting Syria. The Syrians interpret this to mean the Bush administration is fading and its policies will not endure, he said. He suggested that a unified position between Democrats and Republicans would dispel doubts about U.S. policy over the next few years.

¶18. (S) King Abdullah cautioned that, absent more pressure, Iran feels it holds all the cards in the region. If the U.S. were to strike Iran in the current climate, it would be "almost impossible" for countries in the region to stand by the U.S.

Foreign Minister Khatib

¶19. (S) Foreign Minister Abdelelah al Khatib thanked Senator

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Leahy for his letter in support of Jordan's supplemental request. "Jordan is benefiting from your assistance and using it well," he added. Khatib highlighted the Israeli-Palestinian issue as the key priority for Jordan. He reinforced the message that time was running out for the peace process. While full implementation of a peace agreement is not realistic in the limited time available, the process can be launched with active U.S./Quartet engagement. He told the Codel that lack of progress on peace was undermining efforts on other issues such as stabilizing Iraq, Lebanon, and isolating Syria and Iran.

¶110. (S) On Iraq, Senator Cochran cited the political debate in Washington regarding Iraq war funding. He asked what would be the consequences if Congress was unable to agree to continue funding the war. Khatib replied that if the U.S. was not able to succeed in Iraq, the entire region would suffer. Khatib highlighted a few of Jordan's efforts to support the coalition efforts, hosting conferences focused on rebuilding Iraq and reconciliation, and promoting reconciliation with tribal leaders in Al Anbar province. For reconciliation to succeed, Sunnis cannot be treated as a minority, regardless of their numbers, he said.

Iraqis in Jordan Welcome, but a Burden

¶111. (C) The King and the Foreign Minister told the Codel that the presence of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis whom Jordan hosts was a burden, and appealed for additional assistance to deal with it. Khatib said a survey of Iraqis living in Jordan was currently being conducted by Norwegian NGO FAFO, and told the Codel that the exact number of Iraqis in Jordan was unknown but likely much less than the earlier guestimates of 700,000.

UNHCR on Iraqi Resettlement

¶112. (C) Codel also met with UNHCR's MENA Director Radhouane

Nouicer and Jordan Representative Imran Riza on May 28 to discuss the impact of Iraqis living in Jordan. Radhouane and Riza said Jordan faces real and legitimate security concerns with the large number of Iraqis in Jordan. The Iraqi population is represented by all demographic and income levels, but the overall numbers are not known. Riza suggested that a bilateral assistance mechanism could be created to allow member states to provide help directly to the countries affected. While he expected Syria's benefits would be limited due to the current political climate, Jordan would be well positioned to receive aid.

¶13. (SBU) Senators Leahy, Salazar and Cardin expressed concern for the large number of Iraqi refugees and the need for the U.S. to identify ways to help a greater number of them through assistance and increasing the number eligible for resettlement. The Codel was concerned about the slow pace of resettlement so far, and asked if UNHCR thought the U.S. was on target to fill 7,000 resettlement slots this year. Riza said UNHCR referrals were on track, and more than 1,700 had already been passed to the USG. A key test would be the rate of approval when the DHS circuit ride team visits Amman in mid-June.

Minister of Justice -----

¶14. (SBU) Minister of Justice Sharif Zu'bi briefed the Codel on judicial reforms in Jordan. He explained how USAID assistance was being applied to increase judicial independence, strengthen the regulatory framework, create links with civil society organizations and promote professionalism. Zu'bi explained that these initiatives were home grown in Jordan, and overall economic and government reform in Jordan was on a good trajectory, as evidenced by \$3 billion in foreign direct investment in 2006.

Iraqi Scholar Rescue Fund -----

¶15. (SBU) Codel hosted a delegation led by Allan Goodman, from the Institute of International Education (IIE) for dinner on May 26. IIE was visiting Jordan to explore options in Jordan related to its Scholar Rescue Fund, a program that provides temporary refuge to vulnerable Iraqi scholars.

¶16. (U) Codel Leahy has cleared this message.

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